

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Introduction

The Fresno County General Plan is being updated to provide a more current long-term framework for growth in the County and protection of its natural and cultural resources. The Draft General Plan is designed to satisfy State general plan requirements and address related economic development and environmental concerns. The 2020 General Plan Update (Proposed Project) consists of the following: a *Draft General Plan Background Report* (*Background Report*) describing baseline or existing conditions; a *Draft General Plan Policy Document* that includes elements, policies, standards and programs to guide future decisions concerning land use planning and development; and an Economic Development Strategy, which is not part of the General Plan, that formalizes objectives, strategic actions, and organizational responsibilities, and work plans to expand business activity and employment in the County.

This chapter describes the project setting, defines the project, and explains Fresno County's General Plan update process. A thorough description of the environmental setting of Fresno County is contained in the *Background Report*, which is incorporated by reference and summarized, as applicable, in each section of Chapter 4. The *Background Report* is available to the public at the County of Fresno Planning and Resource Management Department, Development Services Division, Suite A, 2220 Tulare Street, Fresno.

Project Setting

Fresno County is located approximately in the center of the San Joaquin Valley, stretching approximately 100 miles from the Coast Range foothills to the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada (see Figure 2-1). The County is bordered by San Benito, Merced, Madera, Mono, Inyo, Tulare, Kings, and Monterey counties. There are 15 incorporated cities in Fresno County, all located on the valley floor. Over 60 percent of the County's total population and about 80 percent of the incorporated population resides in the County's two largest cities, Fresno and Clovis. Interstate 5 (I-5), State Route (SR) 99, SR 33, and SR 41 are the major north-south transportation routes. Major east-west routes include SR 168 and SR 180.

Fresno County is the nation's top-ranked agricultural-producing county. Business and recreational opportunities are important elements of the County's economy.

Fresno County occupies an area of approximately 6,000 square miles. Table 2-1 shows the existing generalized land use categories for the land within the County. Maps of current land uses in the County and sphere of influence (SOI) for incorporated areas are provided in Figures 2-2 and 2-3, respectively.

Figures 2-1 2-2 and 2-3 are individual figures, linked from the Table of Contents

TABLE 2-1 SUMMARY OF EXISTING LAND USE BY GENERALIZED LAND USE CATEGORIES FRESNO COUNTY 1997	
Generalized Land Use Category	Square Miles
Residential	152
Commercial	7
Industrial	11
Agriculture	2,911
Resource Conservation (including national forests and parks, timber preserves)	2,691
Unclassified (includes streets and highways, rivers)	11
Incorporated Cities	154
TOTAL:	6,005
SOURCE: Fresno County, <i>Perspectives on the Year 2020: Economic and Growth Scenarios</i> , Table 2, March 1998.	

As shown in Table 2-1, the single largest category of land use is agriculture. Incorporated cities occupy about 2.5 percent of the County's total land area. The Fresno County Planning Area contains an estimated 5,851 square miles, including approximately 5,772 square miles outside city SOIs. With the exception of State and federally-owned land, the unincorporated area is under the jurisdiction of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors.

The need for additional land to accommodate future growth in 2020 would occur with or without the Proposed Project. Existing land availability and 2020 land demand for cities in Fresno County is shown in Table 2-2. The "Difference" column shows the difference between available land and land demand in 2020. A value shown in parentheses indicates that land demand would exceed available land. As illustrated in Table 2-2, with the exception of the City of Fresno, the projected land demand in 2020 would be accommodated within each city's SOI.

For the purposes of the General Plan Update and EIR, five geographic analysis areas were delineated. The geographic areas have no policy status, but were used during the development of the update process to allocate population and employment for each of the growth scenarios. General characteristics of each of these areas, from west to east, are summarized below. These terms are used in the EIR where appropriate to the analysis. Figure 2-4 shows boundaries of the five geographic analysis areas.

Figure 2-4 is a separate figure linked from the Table of Contents

TABLE 2-2 LAND DEMAND AND AVAILABILITY FOR CITIES WITHIN FRESNO COUNTY Total Gross Acres - Residential and Non-Residential Land Demand					
City	1996 Acreage in SOI	1996 Acreage in City Limits	1996 Unincorporated Acreage in SOI¹	2020 Land Demand Acreage²	Difference³
Coalinga	5,248	2,624	2,624	309	2,315
Clovis	14,592	9,856	4,736	4,556	180
Firebaugh	3,200	1,984	1,216	217	999
Fowler	4,544	1,216	3,328	213	3,115
Fresno	90,880	66,752	24,128	26,099	(1,971)
Huron	1,344	1,024	320	293	27
Kerman	3,072	1,216	1,856	308	1,548
Kingsburg	3,648	1,472	2,176	315	1,861
Mendota	2,240	1,344	896	271	625
Orange Cove	1,664	1,024	640	208	432
Parlier	1,664	960	704	293	411
Reedley	4,672	2,752	1,920	695	1,225
San Joaquin	960	640	320	197	123
Sanger	4,672	2,880	1,792	613	1,179
Selma	6,528	2,496	4,032	723	3,309
Notes: SOI - Sphere of Influence 1. Represents the total amount of unincorporated land outside city limits but within the city sphere of influence. 2. From Exhibit 28, <i>Fresno County General Plan Update Preferred Economic and Growth Scenario Economic and Growth Allocation and Methodology</i> , Applied Development Economics, February 1999. [Table 2-8 of this EIR] 3. The "Difference" column shows the difference between available land and land demand. The negative value (in parentheses) shows land demand that exceeds available land. This does not reflect potential infill development within city limits or existing development in the unincorporated sphere of influence. SOURCE: Applied Development Economics, <i>Fresno County General Plan Update Preferred Economic and Growth Scenario Economic and Growth Allocation and Methodology</i> , Exhibit 29, February 1999.					

Coast Range Foothills

The Coast Range Foothills geographic area lies on the western-most side of Fresno County, generally west of I-5. This area is devoted to primarily public land, rangeland, and agricultural

land with some very small rural communities and highway commercial areas. There are no incorporated cities within this area.

Westside Valley

This western boundary of the Westside Valley geographic area is west of I-5. The San Joaquin River forms the northern boundary. The eastern boundary is just west of the city of San Joaquin and the community of Lanare. This area includes the cities of Firebaugh, Mendota, Coalinga, and Huron. The predominant land use outside of the cities is agriculture, in addition to some small rural communities.

Eastside Valley

The Eastside Valley geographic area is located within the middle of Fresno County between the Westside Valley and the Sierra Foothills. This area is the most urbanized area of the County with 11 cities (e.g., Fresno, Clovis, Kerman, San Joaquin, Sanger, Fowler, Selma, Kingsburg, Parlier, Reedley, and Orange Cove) and several unincorporated communities (e.g., Tranquility, Biola, Lanare, Riverdale, Laton, Del Rey, Caruthers, Easton, and Friant). The land use in this area consists of a mixture of urban and rural residential, commercial, and agricultural uses.

Sierra Foothills

The boundaries of the Sierra Foothills geographic area include the Friant-Kern Canal on the west side and the State and federal lands on the east side. There are no incorporated communities within this area. This area contains mainly rural residential, rural communities, agriculture, and open space.

Sierra Nevada Mountain Area

This area is located on the easternmost side of the County with the western boundary following the State and federal lands. There are no incorporated communities within this area. Generally, this area consists of State and federal land with some rural communities in the northwest.

Existing General Plan Background

The existing Fresno County General Plan was adopted in 1976 and later supplemented with several community plans and various amendments. The 1976 General Plan consists of nine County-wide topical elements, five regional plans, 13 community plans for the smaller incorporated cities, ten plans for unincorporated communities, eight community plans for the Fresno-Clovis area, and six specific plans. All of the General Plan elements have been amended several times over the years since adoption. Table 2-3 lists the 1976 General Plan elements and existing regional plans, community plans, community area plans, and specific plans.

TABLE 2-3 COMPONENTS OF THE EXISTING FRESNO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN	
COUNTY-WIDE GENERAL PLAN ELEMENTS Land Use Transportation Scenic Highways Parks and Recreation Open Space/Conservation Safety/Seismic Safety Noise Housing Public Facilities	
REGIONAL PLANS Sierra-North Regional Plan Coalinga Regional Plan Westside Freeway Regional Plan Kings River Regional Plan Sierra-South Regional Plan	
INCORPORATED CITIES/COMMUNITY PLANS Coalinga Community Plan Firebaugh Community Plan Fowler Community Plan Kerman Community Plan Kingsburg Community Plan Huron Community Plan Mendota Community Plan Orange Cove Community Plan Parlier Community Plan Reedley Community Plan Sanger Community Plan San Joaquin Community Plan Selma Community Plan	
UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITY PLANS Biola Community Plan Caruthers Community Plan Del Rey Community Plan Friant Community Plan Easton Community Plan Laton Community Plan Riverdale Community Plan Shaver Lake Community Plan Tranquillity Community Plan Lanare Community Plan	

FRESNO-CLOVIS COMMUNITY AREA PLANS Bullard Community Plan Fig Garden Neighborhood Plan Clovis Community Plan Fresno High-Roeding Community Plan McLane Community Plan Roosevelt Community Plan Edison Community Plan Woodward Park Community Plan
SPECIFIC PLANS Shaver Lake Forest Specific Plan Bretz Mountain Village Specific Plan Wild Flower Village Specific Plan Millerton Specific Plan Del Rio Specific Plan Quail Lake Estates Specific Plan
SOURCE: Fresno County, Fresno County General Plan Policy Document, Public Review Draft, January 2000.

General Plan Update Process

Fresno County began its General Plan Update program in late 1996 when it selected a team of consultants to assist the County in its update effort.

The General Plan Update process was undertaken in two major phases: the focus of Phase 1 was to establish the foundation and policy direction for the new General Plan; Phase 2 provides for preparation of a Draft General Plan, a Draft EIR, and a Fiscal and Financial Analysis and public review and adoption of the new General Plan. The current General Plan Program is intended to update and expand all County-wide topical elements, with the exception of the Housing Element, which is not scheduled for update until 2002.

The General Plan Update Program has included several activities. Early in 1997, the University of California Cooperative Extension conducted a series of 15 focus groups throughout the County to solicit County residents' views of land use and growth trends, farmland and resource protection, jobs and economic development, and related issues. The focus group effort was specifically designed to provide information to the Board of Supervisors, other County officials, and the consultants working on the General Plan Update.

In July 1997, the County released for public and agency review a *Draft General Plan Background Report* summarizing existing conditions and trends for all issues to be addressed in the new General Plan. Topics included demographic characteristics; land use; agriculture; economic and fiscal conditions; transportation and circulation; public facilities and services; recreational, archaeological, historical, and natural resources; air quality; noise; and safety. The report is being updated in conjunction with preparation of this EIR.

In March 1998, the County released a report entitled: *Economic and Growth Scenarios: Perspectives on the Year 2020*. The report describes five economic scenarios for the County and traces their possible growth-related impacts. This report was the basis for discussion in meetings and presentations held throughout the County over a three-month period in the Spring of 1998. Staff also distributed questionnaires to elicit residents' preferences regarding the County's future economy and land use patterns. The result was summarized into a list of issues and value statements which was forwarded to the Fresno County Planning Commission.

After holding three public hearings, the Planning Commission recommended that the Board of Supervisors direct the pursuit of a combination of three economic scenarios. Under this blend of scenarios, (1) agriculture would continue to be strengthened, emphasizing the production of higher value crops; (2) value-added agriculture would be pursued to extend the role of farming into such areas as food processing; and (3) the County's economy would be further diversified, with the expansion of such industries as information processing, metal working, and machinery operations. The Commission also adopted a number of recommendations based upon issues identified in the public hearings. Commission recommendations were forwarded to the Board of Supervisors in June 1998. The Board also endorsed the principles in *A Landscape of Choice: Strategies for Improving Patterns of Community Growth*, an independent report published by the Growth Alternatives Alliance in April 1998. The Board endorsed findings of the report and guiding principles contained in the document were included in the Board's policy direction for the GPU process.

Based on decisions made by the Board of Supervisors concerning economic and growth scenarios, the Economic Development Strategy was prepared to formalize objectives, strategic actions, organizational responsibilities, and work plans to expand business activity and employment in the County.

The ultimate purpose of the Economic Development Strategy is to provide direction for County-wide economic development efforts. Following Board review in December 1998, a preliminary draft of the Economic Development Strategy was sent out to over 300 local agencies, organizations, and individuals. The report is being revised based on comments received and will be available for future review by the Board and ultimately for adoption by the Board at the end of the update process.

Development of Economic and Growth Assumptions

Based on the recommendations and direction obtained through the process described above, the Draft General Plan is based on a combination of Economic Scenarios B/C (Shifts in Agricultural Production/Value-Added Agriculture) and D (Non-Agricultural Basic Employment) that were described in the March 1998 *Economic and Growth Scenarios: Perspectives on the Year 2020* report. The statistical allocation of population and job growth among the County's 15 incorporated cities and five unincorporated geographic sectors of the County was based on a methodology described in the *Preferred Economic and Growth Scenario: Economic and Growth Allocation and Methodology Report* prepared in February 1999. This economic and growth allocation was used as a general guide for the expected level and distribution of growth to assist the County Staff, General Plan Consultants, and other update participants in drafting General Plan policies and the land use diagram, and in preparing the General Plan EIR.

Projected population and job growth were allocated to both incorporated areas (spheres of influence) and unincorporated areas within the County.

The estimated population and employment projections for the Proposed Project are lower than those assumed in Scenarios B/C and D. New California Department of Finance (DOF) projections released in December 1998 reduces projected County-wide year 2020 population from approximately 1.5 million to 1.1 million. The 1998 DOF 1996-2020 projection averages 1.6 percent annual growth, compared to 2.5 percent that occurred during the 1970-90 period and 2.2 percent from 1990 to 1996. The most recent growth rates have been below 2 percent, and DOF estimates over the long term that Fresno County will move closer to the State average, which DOF projects to decline from the high growth periods during the 1970s and 1980s.

The DOF projections reflect a continuation of past economic development trends in Fresno County and do not recognize the potential effect of the County's proposed Economic Development Strategy in terms of increased job growth or shifts in the type of jobs that may be created in the County.

However, because the main concern of the proposed Economic Development Strategy is improving the balance between job growth and labor force, DOF projections were selected as the basis for purposes of updating the General Plan.

Project Description

Project Objectives

Fresno County's General Plan Update would provide a County-wide policy framework for urban and rural development, economic development, and protection of agricultural land and environmental quality. The 2020 General Plan Update (GPU) was designed primarily to increase employment and economic development opportunities in Fresno County. Various economic and growth scenarios were developed in the GPU process, leading to the selection of an Economic Development Strategy that is designed to achieve a substantial reduction in the County's unemployment rate. The revised General Plan as proposed is based on aggregate employment, housing and population projections for subareas of the County, rather than updated land use designations for particular areas of the County. The ultimate purpose of the Economic Development Strategy is to provide direction for County-wide funding allocations, economic development program, welfare-to-work efforts and related actions.

Section 15124(b) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that the project description include a statement of the objectives of the Proposed Project.

The County Department of Planning and Resource Management has identified the following primary objectives for the Proposed Project:

- Diversify the Fresno County economy to provide a broad range of employment opportunities.
- Reduce unemployment and promote the creation of higher wage jobs.

- Minimize conversion of agricultural land.
- Promote compact urban development.
- Minimize destruction and disturbance of natural habitat.
- Enhance the quality of life for residents of Fresno County.

Project Characteristics

The guiding principles for the General Plan Update are contained in the Economic Development Strategy, which would alter the mix and amount of employment-generating development in the cities and unincorporated areas of the County. The General Plan Update is also based on the following themes:

<i>Economic Development:</i>	The plan seeks to promote job growth and reduce unemployment through the enhancement and expansion of its traditional agricultural economic base and through the diversification of its economic base, expanding such business clusters as information technology, industrial machinery, and tourism.
<i>Agricultural Land Protection:</i>	The plan seeks to protect its productive agricultural land as the county's most valuable natural resource and the historical basis of its economy through directing new urban growth to cities and existing unincorporated communities and by limiting the encroachment of incompatible development upon agricultural areas.
<i>Growth Accommodation:</i>	The plan is designed to accommodate population growth through the year 2020 consistent with the California Department of Finance projection of 1.1 million by 2020 (November 1998). This represents an additional population of approximately 344,000 (see Appendix A).
<i>Urban-Centered Growth:</i>	The plan promotes compact growth by directing most new urban development to incorporated cities and existing urban communities that already have the infrastructure to accommodate such growth. This plan assumes over 93 percent of new population growth and new job growth will occur within incorporated city spheres of influence and seven percent would occur in unincorporated areas (see Appendix A). Accordingly, this plan prohibits designation of new areas as Planned Rural Community and restricts the designation of new areas for rural residential development while allowing for the orderly development of existing rural residential areas.
<i>Efficient and Functional Land Use Patterns:</i>	The plan promotes compact, mixed-use, and pedestrian and transit-oriented development within city spheres as well as in the county's unincorporated communities.
<i>Service Efficiency:</i>	The plan provides for the orderly and efficient extension of infrastructure such as roadways, water, wastewater, drainage, and expansion services to support the county's economic development goals and to facilitate compact growth patterns. The plan supports development of a multi-modal transportation system that meets community mobility needs, improves air quality, and shifts travel away from single-occupant automobiles to less polluting transportation models.

<i>Recreational Development:</i>	The plan supports the expansion of existing recreational opportunities and the development of new opportunities, particularly along the San Joaquin River, in the foothills, and in the Sierras, for the employment of county residents and to increase tourism as part of the county's diversified economic base.
<i>Resource Protection:</i>	The plan seeks to protect and promote the careful management of the county's natural resources, such as its soils, water, air quality, minerals, and wildlife and its habitat, to support the county's economic goals and to maintain the county's environmental quality.
<i>Hazard Mitigation:</i>	The plan seeks to protect county residents and visitors through mitigating hazards and nuisances such as geological seismic hazards, flooding, wildland fires, hazardous materials, and noise.
<i>Enhanced Quality of Life:</i>	The plan strives throughout all its elements to improve the attractiveness of the county to existing residents, new residents, and visitors through increased prosperity, attractive forms of new development, protection of open space and view corridors, promotion of cultural facilities and activities, efficient delivery of services, and expansion of recreational opportunities.

Development of the Proposed Project also reflects the following guiding principles identified in *A Landscape of Choice*:

1. Utilize urban land as efficiently as possible.
2. Develop livable communities that emphasize pedestrian or transit-oriented design.
3. Recognize the importance of agriculture and the need to protect productive farmland.

These principles provided direction for development of the General Plan policies.

The General Plan Update would not immediately alter the existing land use designations or zoning in the County or change the rate and amount of population growth projected over the next 20 years. While the size of the County's population is not expected to be affected by the Proposed Project, the manner in which growth would occur would be influenced by updates of the General Plan policies.

General Plan Policies

The Proposed Project is a comprehensive update of the County-wide topical elements (excluding housing) of the Fresno County General Plan. Existing elements of the General Plan are being modified or expanded and organized under the following headings:

- Economic Development
- Land Use
- Transportation and Circulation

- Public Facilities and Services
- Open Space and Conservation
- Health and Safety
- Housing (not included in this update)

For the most part, the General Plan Update is intended to be self-mitigating; it is assumed impacts identified in this EIR would generally be mitigated through adopted Federal, State, and local laws and regulations, through the implementation of identified General Plan policies and programs for unincorporated areas of the County, or some combination thereof, rather than through measures independent of the General Plan. The proposed policies are listed in the Draft General Plan Policy Document, which is available for public review at:

County of Fresno
Planning and Resource Management Department
Development Services Division, Suite "A"
2220 Tulare Street
Fresno, CA 93721

Economic Development Strategy and Growth Projections

The Draft General Plan Policy Document is based upon a preferred economic and growth scenario, the draft Economic Development Strategy, and related direction provided by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors, as described in "Development of Economic and Growth Assumptions," above. The Proposed Project includes higher rates of job growth in relation to population growth than the County has experienced in the past. Under the General Plan Update, the County's population would grow at an average annual rate of 1.6 percent, from a population of 769,700 in 1996 to 1,113,785 in the year 2020, consistent with December 1998 Department of Finance projections. Job growth would exceed population growth, reducing unemployment from 13 percent to 4 percent. Key employment growth sectors would be in agricultural manufacturing, non-agricultural manufacturing, and commercial office development. Table 2-4 illustrates changes in the employment profile that would occur during the 1996-2020 timeframe of the Proposed Project.

The geographic distribution of the 1996-2020 growth increment and year 2020 population (and the percent change from existing conditions) is shown in Table 2-5. Under the Proposed Project, 93 percent of new population and employment growth would occur within city SOIs and 7 percent in the unincorporated areas, compared to 85 percent and 15 percent, respectively, in 1996. Clovis and Fresno would gain a higher percentage of future growth in population than their 1996 share. Population in the Westside Valley geographic area would also increase, but not to the same level as incorporated areas in the Eastside Valley geographic area.

Table 2-6 lists the geographic distribution of employment by business sector. As shown in Table 2-6, employment would become increasingly concentrated in incorporated areas (primarily Fresno and Clovis) and their SOIs. Table 2-7 shows the geographic distribution of non-residential space for retail, commercial, industrial, and public/institutional uses. As shown in Table 2-6, Clovis

Table 2-4

Table 2-5

Table 2-6

Table 2-7

and Fresno would gain a higher percentage of future growth in employment categories than their 1996 share. The only exception to this is in agricultural production employment, which would increase more in the County's unincorporated areas. The highest job growth would occur in the office sector. Office employment in Fresno and Clovis would increase from 70 to 80 percent of that in the business sector. Clovis is projected to increase from 10 percent to 16 percent. In the industrial sector, the unincorporated areas would have a very high growth rate. Some food processing development is likely to occur in the unincorporated areas as this sector is likely to expand rapidly. The County-wide General Plan Land Use Diagram and the various regional, community, and specific plan land use diagrams contain a surplus of planned commercial and industrial land for development. However, market forces would largely determine the rate at which employment growth occurs in Fresno County. Fresno County could ultimately accommodate an estimated 49,700 jobs.

Land use projections assume that future development would generally be consistent with the existing residential and non-residential development patterns and densities. The incremental change in land use for the period 1996-2020 and year 2020 geographic distribution of developed non-agricultural land (in gross acres) is presented in Table 2-8. In 2020, it is estimated that the County would have approximately 77,000 gross acres of residential land and 38,000 acres of non-residential land.¹ These totals include all land within the County, including the SOI. Land use projections indicate that almost 90 percent of newly developed land would occur in the incorporated areas. As shown in Table 2-8, a little over one-half of the new development would be in the incorporated areas of the Eastside Valley geographic area. Incorporated areas of the Westside Valley geographic area would also experience a similar increase in land use demand. As indicated in Table 2-2, the projected land demand in 2020 would be accommodated within each city's SOI, except in Fresno.

Table 2-9 indicates the anticipated increase in housing. As shown in Table 2-9, there would be an additional approximately 81,600 single-family dwelling units, totaling approximately 263,000 dwelling units in year 2020. Multi-family dwelling units would increase approximately an additional 29,300, to a total of approximately 93,700. Most of the housing growth would occur in the Fresno-Clovis area. For both the incorporated and unincorporated areas, housing densities would be four dwelling units per acre (DU/ac) for single-family residences, and eight DU/ac for multi-family housing. As discussed above, an additional 24,070 acres would be developed to accommodate increased housing, bringing the total number of acres developed in residential uses in 2020 to approximately 77,000.

As discussed above, the Proposed Project would not affect the County's population growth or housing development. The Proposed Project, particularly the Economic Development Strategy, would affect the amount and type of non-residential development, including the mix of agricultural, industrial and commercial development. To illustrate the direct effect of the project on these sectors, Table 2-10 shows development that would be anticipated in 2020 if the Proposed Project is not implemented, and compares it to non-residential development as it is expected to occur under the Proposed Project.

Table 2-8

Table 2-9

Table 2-10

Relationship of General Plan Update to Other Existing Plans and Policies

Fresno County regulates the use of land within its jurisdiction through its *General Plan* and implementing regulations for the purpose of promoting and protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public. The *General Plan* is a legal document, adopted by the Board of Supervisors, which primarily affects development in the County. There are numerous other legal documents affecting development in the County. These include the Fresno County Zoning Ordinance, Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), Spheres of Influence, and city plans.

In unincorporated areas, the *General Plan* directly controls land use and is the legal basis for zoning and approval of development permits. Inside the city limits of Fresno County's 15 cities, the individual city general plans directly control land use. Since city general plans and the County's *General Plan* overlap in areas planned for city expansion but not yet annexed, the County cooperates with the cities in an effort to develop compatible land use plans for these areas of overlap.

The Proposed Project does not include updated land use maps for County planning areas (i.e., regional plans, community plans, and specific plans) or identify more specific locations where future growth would occur. Those land use decisions would be made by the County Board of Supervisors for unincorporated areas and by city councils for incorporated areas. The County's population is assumed to grow at the same rate with or without the *General Plan* Update. For these reasons, the focus of the EIR analysis is on the changes that would occur due to the increased economic activity engendered by the Economic Development Strategy. Most of the growth associated with the Economic Development Strategy is assumed to occur within the cities' spheres of influence. It is assumed that projects within the spheres would be annexed, and therefore subject to city discretionary action, rather than the County. The County would have jurisdiction over the small proportion of growth that would occur outside of the incorporated areas and within cities' spheres of influence.

Regional plans, community plans, and specific plans will not be updated as part of the Proposed Project, although the *General Plan* Update proposes a new framework for all these plans, and identifies needed plan changes or additions based on revisions to the County-wide elements.

Project Schedule

The timeframe for the updated *General Plan* will be the year 2020. The *General Plan* Update assumes that the County population will grow from 769,700 in 1996 to 1,113,785 in 2020, consistent with projections released by the California Department of Finance in December 1998. Increases in job growth would also occur over the same time period.

Intended Uses of the EIR and Required Approvals and Actions

The proposed *General Plan* Update provides goals, policies, and implementation measures consistent with the intent of Government Code Sections 65300 and 65300.5, which would guide the future growth of the County. The *General Plan* would provide a comprehensive framework for the County's subsequent adoption of a wide range of policy documents, standards, specific plans, and regulations (ordinances). As discussed in Chapter 1, Introduction, this EIR is a program-level document intended to provide information to the public and to decision-makers regarding the potential environmental effects of adoption of the GPU.

The *Draft General Plan Policy Document* and *Draft EIR* have been prepared by a consulting team in coordination with County staff. Following the release of these documents for public and agency review and comment, the Planning Commission will conduct public hearings on the *Draft General Plan* and *Draft EIR*. After consideration of public input, the Planning Commission will deliberate and make recommendations for any modifications to the General Plan Update. At that point, County staff and consultants will make revision to the documents and prepare the final *General Plan* for adoption by the Board of Supervisors and prepare the *Final EIR* for certification.

The *Final EIR* will be certified before the Board of Supervisors formally adopts the updated *General Plan*. The County may also use the *Final EIR* as a program EIR or first-tier EIR in the approval of subsequent plans and projects. Other local and State agencies may also use the *Final EIR* in the approval of their own plans and projects.

To implement the General Plan Update, the County would adopt or approve a number of more specific actions, such as ordinances, guidelines, studies, specific plans, use permits, or subdivision maps, all of which would be required to be consistent with the guidelines provided in the General Plan Update. Some of the major policy documents, standards, regulations, programs, and procedures that may be adopted, approved, or revised by Fresno County based on the General Plan Update include, but would not be limited to: regional plans, community plans, specific plans, zoning ordinance and map, subdivision regulations, capital improvement plans, transportation plans, design review guidelines, redevelopment plans, public facilities master plans, and various ordinances (e.g., noise, grading, tree protection).

Revising the General Plan Update

From time to time, the County will be asked to consider proposals for specific amendments to the General Plan. The County will initiate some of these proposals itself, but most will be initiated by private property owners and developers. Most general plan amendments involve changes in land use designations for individual parcels. State law limits general plan amendments to four times per year, but each amendment can include multiple changes. As with the adoption of the general plan itself, general amendments are subject to environmental review, public notice, and hearing requirements and must not create inconsistencies with other parts of the plan.

Alternatives

The following three alternatives to the Proposed Project have been identified. Additional detail regarding each alternative and the analysis of the environmental effects associated with each alternative is provided in Chapter 6, Alternatives Analysis.

No Project Alternative

This alternative is based on Scenario A from the March 1998 *Economic and Growth Scenarios Report*. The No Project Alternative assumes that population will grow in accordance with the 1998 Department of Finance projections, identical to that of the Proposed Project (approximately 1.1 million County-wide in 2020), but that the County would not pursue the

Economic Development Strategy. The population and housing projections for the incorporated and unincorporated areas would be identical to the Proposed Project. Job growth would not accelerate as projected for the Proposed Project scenario, and the employment profile would remain at prevailing levels and future growth would reflect current trends, as described in Scenario A in the March 1998 *Economic and Growth Scenarios Report*.

High Growth Alternative

Some jurisdictions have commented that the 1998 DOF projections underestimate future growth in the County. Under the High Growth Alternative, County population would increase by 743,669 for a total of approximately 1.5 million in year 2020, consistent with the employment assumptions in Scenario E in the March 1998 *Economic and Growth Scenarios Report*. The High Growth Alternative provides a "worst-case" analysis of the Economic Development Strategy, which would better reflect environmental effects if growth occurs at faster pace than estimated in the 1998 DOF projections.

Increased Residential Development Densities Alternative

Employment and population projections under this alternative would be the same as for the Proposed Project. However, residential development densities would be higher and residential development projections by acreage would, therefore, be reduced. Higher residential development densities would be comparable to those recommended in the report, *A Landscape of Choice*, which was endorsed by the Board of Supervisors in October 1998. These projections are based on average densities of 6 dwelling units per acre (DU/ac) for single-family housing and 12 units per acre for multi-family housing, as compared to 4 dwelling units per acre (DU/ac) for single-family residences, and 8 DU/ac for multi-family housing under the Proposed Project.

ENDNOTES

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1. This figure does not include existing rural residential acreage, because an accurate inventory does not exist for rural residential development.